

Custom Comfort

Selling takes confidence, knowledge, and listening. And it takes putting your customers at ease by showing them that you are completely interested in addressing their needs and concerns. Of course, you want to be sure you are using reliable products that provide a good customer experience and are profitable for you, but first you must get your customer into a good place about the time you will spend together and the money that they will pay you.

cause it shows that someone else likes doing business with you. Right there is a great opportunity for you to begin the friendly interview process. You know, *get to know your customer*.

What did they like about their friends' system? Was it the theater? Was it how stealth the system was? Was it how simple it operated? These are all leading questions that will give you insight into what to recommend for them. Now you can begin to bond

customer will be chill with you because they are already having a great experience. If you do this right, money should not be a big topic of discussion yet.

One of the most challenging areas for customers is the technology itself. Will it be quickly outdated? Will I be able to learn it? Will my family be able to use it if I am not at home? I recommend that if the technology issue comes up that you find out as much as you can about what home entertainment products they have been using up until this time. This will be a level-setting process for you.

For instance, if they are frequently and successfully recording television shows on their digital set-top box and have their iPod fully loaded and organized in multiple libraries, you know you have someone willing to try something new and who will be ready to learn more. These are good customers to find. They love fun stuff and spend money.

If your customer has a system that is infrequently used and is in a somewhat non-operational state, you have a customer who needs something as "plug and play" as possible. They have no inclination to learn more than the

with them over elements of whatever it was that they dug about their friend's system.

Get into the thought process that goes into creating a home theater, a stealth system, or a remarkably simple system. This is fun stuff to talk about with your customer. They'll get into your head on what you like to do for customers and new ideas will flow, selling will take off, and the



basics and your job is to sell them awesome products that sound and look great with a nearly fool-proof, one-layer system. Don't oversell these people. You want them to come back to you when they are ready to go to the next level. If you oversell these people, then they are gone for life.

When a customer is meeting with you, almost always, they are jazzed to learn about something new from you. After all, you are the expert who knows everything about this wild stuff that we call custom. Your customer gets excited when you ring their bell about a cool new capability or product. By now you should have some idea about their interests, so come up with something new to sell to them. Don't overdo it, but do not miss the opportunity to get them into something that they haven't thought about before. This can also become their point of personalization for their system versus their friend who made the referral. Everyone likes to one-up their buds when it comes to home, wheels, and their home's fun system.

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"First you must get your customer into a good place about the time you will spend together and the money that they will pay you"

"At ease" sounds good, right? As with so many things, it is easier said than done. So how do you ensure that "at ease" begins early in the process of working with your customer? Your company culture and selling style is key. The impression you make on them is long lasting right from the first moment they become aware of you. Say they were referred to you. That's good be-

MANAGEMENT MODULE

Furman Names International Distributor of the Year

PETALUMA, CA—Furman Sound recently recognized SF Marketing with its International Distributor of the Year Award. Sol Fleising, founder and president of SF Marketing, accepted the award in recognition of its sales and marketing success from

Dave Keller, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Furman, at SF Marketing's office in Montreal.

Also in attendance at the presentation were: David Dilitkanich, marketing manager for Furman; Mark MacLellan, product manager, Pro Audio, for SF Marketing; and Denise Tam, vice president of



Furman presents SF Marketing with distributor honors

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for roaming control around the home; longer battery life; the scroll wheel button should have the enter key in the center of the scroll wheel button instead of below it; if it weighed less than a pound that would be ideal. Although, 1.5 pounds is much better than carrying a laptop around your home for home control, if the Q1 weighed less than a pound it would make it even more appealing; a screen that is less reflective to light. Although the Samsung Q1 works well inside the home, outside the home in either direct or indirect sunlight the screen is very difficult to read and navigate.

By way of comparison, the new Sonos remote controller is one of the best, easiest to use lightweight remote control that we have sold and supported. The problem with the Sonos remote is that it only operates the home's whole-house audio system, it does not control any television or home control needs. As a result, it adds one more remote control to a family that may already have a whole host of additional A/V remote controls to master.

The new Samsung Q1 tablet PC matches the elegance and ease of use of the Sonos controller while also serving the home's complete video and home control needs. The dream of any custom electronics integrator is to offer our clients a single easy to use remote that can operate all of the home's electronics—from audio/video to lighting control, thermostats, cameras, security panels, and even motorized window treatments. Thanks to the new Samsung Q1 running Windows applications like the Lifeware software suite we are getting very close to our vision of home control nirvana.

Delano

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I once visited a dealer whose portfolio of work was laid out with an interesting twist. It started out with some cool rooms, some shots of nicely dressed racks, a killer pool, bar-beque, and an outdoor television. But then it got really good. Previous work was arranged by the advanced second systems installed for first-time and repeat customers. He also had a section for "my first home theater" which showcased clients who never had a system installed before. For newer customers this ap-

Batteries

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The next key factor to look for is a unit specifically designed for and tested with high-end audio/video gear, especially high-powered components like amps, subwoofers, and larger TVs. Higher-powered A/V components draw power from the utility in a very unique and dramatic way. They often draw very high amounts of current for a short period of time on start up that can overload and even damage traditional UPS' that are designed for home computer loads.

Manufacturers will design good A/V battery backups to support their targeted environment. They will be quieter both on and off battery. Audible alarms will be off by default. LED and/or display brightness can be adjusted to suit the user's personal choice. IT or home computer UPS', on the other hand, will likely be quite noisy. High-end battery backups will output a pure sine wave when on battery, whereas, home computer UPS' typically output a square wave.

How Many? There are high-end battery backup solutions that not only protect against blackouts, but also offer all the features of a good A/V power conditioner. This type of all-in-one solution will protect the entire system from all types of power threats found in the home. Look for a single unit that offers surge protection, noise filtering, voltage regulation, and pure sine wave battery backup.

Patrick Donovan is CSN product line manager for American Power Conversion, a manufacturer of power management systems based in West Kingston, Rhode Island.

proach best illustrated how their first system could be lots of fun and not a ton of money. What really struck me was the last section of the portfolio, which showed the growth of customers from a first system, a second system, and a third system right up to complete home integration.

The key thing here is that the dealer used the portfolio to tell a story to prospective clients. This CI dealer has a proven track record of designing and selling systems to a range of customers, many of who come back for more. Imagine that: building a great referral business through quality work and customer satisfaction. At ease!